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DELHI, KOLKATA, CHENNAI HOTSPOTS FOR ABDOMINAL OBESITY: STUDY

The three metros have emerged as hotspots for abdominal obesity among both men and women, the study in the *Nature Scientific* journal reports

SEDENTARY JOBS, PROCESSED FOODS BLAMED

The study by researchers from the Health Systems Transformation Platform found over half of women aged 15-49 (56.6%) and nearly half of men aged 15-54 (48.9%) in India have abdominal obesity. The researchers attributed this trend to long hours in sedentary jobs, increased reliance on motorised transport, and the widespread consumption of processed foods

HIGHER PREVALENCE AMONG URBAN RESIDENTS

- Higher levels of abdominal obesity were seen among older adults, wealthier groups, and urban residents, the researchers noted
- "Metropolitan districts surrounding Delhi NCR, Kolkata, and Chennai demonstrated elevated prevalence among both sexes," the study noted. Abdominal obesity was measured using the waist-to-hip ratio

NFHS-5

DATA OF OVER 7 LAKH PEOPLE FROM 707 DISTRICTS WERE EXAMINED

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

US rescues airman in daring mission

Aviator scales 7,000-ft ridge to avoid capture by Iran; Trump says Tehran will be hit on Tuesday if Strait remains closed

DAY 37 | WAR WATCH

AGENCIES @Washington, Tehran

A wounded US Air Force colonel survived 36 gruelling hours in the rugged mountains of southern Iran, evading capture by Iranian forces before Navy SEAL commandos extracted him in a dramatic night-time operation, which President Donald Trump termed nothing short of "miraculous."

Armed with only a pistol and moving on injured legs, the colonel — a weapons systems officer who had ejected from an F-15E Strike Eagle fighter jet shot down over southern Iran on Friday — navigated treacherous terrain to stay ahead of enemy patrols. At one point, he scaled a 7,000-foot ridgeline while American aircraft bombed an approaching Iranian convoy to buy him time, *The Mail* reported Sunday.

US aviators undergo SERE training in the event they have to eject over hostile territory -- survival, evasion, resistance and escape. They wear a combat vest with a radio/GPS-coded beacon to transmit their position, while they also carry water, food, first-aid material and a pistol in order to survive. The airman was wounded after his ejection but could still walk, according to news outlet Axios, which cited a US official.

Iran had placed a bounty on the officer's head, setting off a race between Tehran and Washington to locate the missing aviator. "Everything is being thrown at finding the missing airman," a source close to the President told *The Mail* on Sunday. "The fear is he will be captured and used as a pawn."

The pilot of the stricken jet had been recovered within 45 minutes of the crash.

The extraction encountered serious complications. Two American transport aircraft became stranded at a remote staging location inside Iran and had to be destroyed by US forces to keep them out of Iranian hands, according to *The New York Times* and *CBS News*. Three additional planes were then deployed to ferry the rescued airman and his escort out of the country.

A regional intelligence official, speaking anonymously, told Associated Press that "a technical malfunction — not enemy fire — had rendered the two planes unusable." Iran's version differed sharply. Iranian military spokesman Ebrahim Zolfaghari declared that the US operation, staged from an abandoned airstrip in southern Isfahan province, had been "completely foiled." He claimed two C-130 transport planes and two Black Hawk helicopters had been destroyed.

The CIA reportedly ran a parallel deception operation to help keep the aviator safe. Trump declared victory on his Truth Social platform on Sunday morning, saying: "WE GOT HIM!" P9

Whole region will burn: Iran

Iran's powerful parliament speaker warned US President Donald Trump on Sunday that his "reckless moves" would mean "our whole region is going to burn". The "only real solution is respecting rights of Iranian people and ending this dangerous game," Mohammad Ghalibaf said.

Iran FM calls up Jaishankar

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi spoke with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar Sunday, amid an escalating rhetoric from Washington. "Received a call from Foreign Minister Araghchi. Discussed present situation," EAM said, marking the sixth conversation since the war began

The wreckage of a downed American jet and two helicopters involved in a rescue of a US Colonel, in Isfahan province | AP

PROPORTIONAL DELIMITATION IS A DEMOGRAPHIC COUP: PINARAYI

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

STRESSING that the upcoming delimitation process requires scrutiny rather than blind acceptance, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Sunday demanded a constitutional guarantee for states that have successfully stabilised their population. Speaking exclusively to this newspaper, Vijayan said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's assurance that southern states will not lose their current number of seats is a clever play on words that masks injustice.

EXPRESS EXCLUSIVE

"The core issue facing the Indian Republic is not merely the absolute number of seats a state holds, but its proportional representation and relative political weight within the Union," Vijayan said, responding to Modi's remarks.

During an election rally in Kerala on Saturday, Modi had said that Lok Sabha seats would not be reduced in those Indian states that have successfully controlled population. The PM also said the total number of seats would increase to benefit states across the country.

Calling for consensus, Vijayan said the inter-state seat ratio must be maintained at the 1971 census level until all states achieve population stability.

"Any increase in the total number of seats must be structured so that it does not reduce the relative strength of states that have excelled in human development indicators. A decision of this magnitude cannot be dictated by the Union government. It requires a consensus reached through the Inter-State Council and Parliament, respecting the diversity and the sovereign rights of all constituent states. If the Union government proceeds with a delimitation exercise based solely on current population figures, it effectively punishes states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and others that have rigorously implemented national policies on population control and social development," he said. CONTINUED ON P5

PIC: VINCENT PULIKKAL

A decision of this magnitude, which affects the very foundation of our Republic, cannot be dictated by Union govt

Pinarayi Vijayan, Kerala CM

Bengal tribunal asks EC to add candidate's name in voters list

SUBHENDU MAITI @ Kolkata

IN its first verdict, an appellate tribunal in West Bengal on Sunday directed the Election Commission to include the name of Congress candidate in Farakka, Mahtab Sheikh, in the supplementary voter list by the end of the day.

The order of the tribunal headed by the former Calcutta High Court Chief Justice TS Sivagnanam came a day before the April 6 deadline for submitting nomination for the first-phase polls in the state.

Mahtab's trouble started as his name was flagged under the 'logical discrepancy' status in the post-SIR voter list.

His name also did not figure in the supplementary list of voters marked as 'under adjudication' by the ECI.

The Supreme Court had allowed voters excluded voters to move any one of the 19 appellate tribunals being set up in West Bengal to contest the exclusion.

However, the Congress nominee could not move any tribunal because of the delay in setting up of these units and the last date of filing nomination was approaching.

He sought the intervention of the SC, which in turn asked him approach a tribunal. Mahtab then moved the tribunal of Justice Sivagnanam, among the first to be set up, at Bijan Bhaban at Salt Lake.

"My name figures as Mahtab Sheikh in Aadhaar card, passport, driving licence, and son's birth certificate. Despite these proofs, I lost my eligibility as a voter in the supplementary list. Now it is solved," he said.

Mahtab Sheikh | EXPRESS

'Logical discrepancy'

Mahtab was in the 'logical discrepancy' group because of a discrepancy in his as well as his father's names. The tribunal noted that there is no discrepancy in Mahtab's name though his father's name has some inconsistencies

ORDEAL ENDS

Kerala woman trekker traced in Kodagu, survived on water for 4 days

PRAJNA GR @ Madikeri

A woman trekker from Kerala, who had mysteriously gone missing from the Tadiandamol trail in Kodagu, was traced after four days in one of the forest zones of Tadiandamol range on Sunday. Being an experienced trekker, Sharanya, who is 36 years old, survived only on water for four days. She is out of danger and has been shifted to Virajpet Hospital for a general check-up.

Over a hundred people, including personnel from the Anti-Naxal Force, reserve police and forest department and also members of the Adiya and Kudiya tribes were involved in the search operation over the last four days.

Sharanya, who hails from Nadapuram in Kozhikode, went missing on April 2 while trekking in Tadiandamol, the highest peak in Kodagu. She was traced around 5.30 pm on Sunday. Members of the Adiya tribe — Raju, Aiyappa, Subramani and Mani — tracked her inside the sacred grove in Tadiandamol range.

Speaking to the media, Sharanya said that she went without food for three days. "I lost my way while climbing down. I saw a few people when I was climbing down and when I lost them, I took a left. Then I felt that I saw more people, but got lost completely. I tried contacting the forest helpline and my colleague from office, but there were no signals on my phone as there was no network," she added. She explained that she walked till about 6.45 pm on April 2, the day she got lost, and when she found a stream, she decided to rest there. The next day, since the sky was visible, she was on the lookout for drones. On the third day, she got drenched in heavy rain and was cold. She said she was not scared and did not panic, but spent sleepless nights.

Her elder brother Shyam told *The New Indian Express* that Sharanya lost her way after reaching the peak. "She was waiting for someone while getting down, but could not trace back her path," he said.

Virajpet MLA AS Ponnanna, who was at the spot monitoring the search operation, met Sharanya, and she introduced him to the tribes who rescued her. As Ponnanna was announcing that he was forming more teams to search for Sharanya, he got the message that she had been rescued. "She is an experienced trekker. She took shelter at a place where water was available and she slept on the rocks. She was drenched in the rain. Five people from the Adiya tribe rescued her," he explained. He said the forest department will drop Sharanya to her hometown of Nadapuram.

Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre praised Sharanya for her courage. He said surviving in the the forest for four days was a remarkable feat. P5

I lost my way while climbing down. I saw a few people when I was climbing down and when I lost them, I took a left. Then I felt that I saw more people, but got lost completely

— Sharanya, trekker

TIM-TASTIC!

Tim David (70 off 25b) plays a shot to take RCB to 250/3 against CSK, at M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru on Sunday. RCB won by 43 runs | KEVIN NASHON | P11

EXPRESS READ

Nitish to take oath as RS member on April 10

PATNA: Bihar CM and JDU chief Nitish Kumar will take oath as a Rajya Sabha member on April 10, paving the way for formation of a new government in the state, Bihar BJP president Sanjay Saraogi said on Sunday. P8

'Maha jungleraj' in Bengal': PM attacks Didi

KOLKATA: Attacking the Mamata Banerjee govt in West Bengal, PM Modi said the gherao of seven judicial officers in Malda district was a proof of 'maha jungleraj' of the Trinamool Congress. P8

MINISTRY'S NOD AWAITED

Army pushes ₹250 cr fund to ease risk for defence startups

JAVARIA RANA @ New Delhi

WITH defence startups often unable to move beyond the trial stage, the Army has proposed a ₹250 crore annual Field Exploitation and Capability Acceleration (FECA) fund per Service Headquarters. The proposal is under consideration by the defence ministry.

The proposal, first outlined in February by Army Design Bureau Additional Director General Maj Gen C S Mann, has now been fleshed out.

It aims to create a structured system to test and evaluate new technologies in real conditions, backed by small initial orders to assess performance.

"The idea is to plug gaps by allowing improvements to systems over time, adapting civilian technologies for military use and covering costs during trials and field use, including damage and other expenses that startups currently have to bear on their own," an Army official told this newspaper. A key element of the proposal is risk support, which addresses a major gap in the current system. At present, startups bear the full cost of equipment damaged or expended during trials, including transportation, repairs and modifications.

"There have been many cases where graduates from top institutions invest all their savings to build systems, only to see them fail in high-altitude conditions. Equipment gets damaged, sometimes destroyed, effectively ending a startup's journey," the official said, adding, "Even a single failed trial can set a startup back significantly."

Under the proposed framework, startups and MSMEs will be given a three to four month window to demonstrate their systems. "If a system performs well, it can be taken up for limited field exploitation orders, with the possibility of scaling up to bulk procurement...," the official said.

PM's assurance to South on LS seats aimed at polls: CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

KARNATAKA Chief Minister **Siddaramaiah** on Sunday criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement on not reducing the number of Parliament seats in southern states, alleging "This sudden reassurance for southern states appears less like statesmanship and more like election-driven messaging, timed conveniently with political calculations in states like Kerala and Tamil Nadu."

He posted on X that the issue has never been about the number of Lok Sabha seats of southern states increasing. The concern is about how they increase - and who benefits disproportionately, he said. He stated that while every state may see an increase, the rate and scale of it clearly favours BJP-dominated states. "Uttar Pradesh is expected to go from 80 to 120 seats (plus 40 seats), Maharashtra from 48 to 72 (plus 24), Bihar from 40 to 60 (plus 20), Madhya Pradesh from 29 to 43-44 (plus 15), Rajasthan from 25 to 37-38 (plus 12-13) and Gujarat from 26 to 39 (plus 13)."

He stated, "Southern states see smaller gains. Karnataka rises from 28 to 42 (plus 14), TN from 39 to 58-59 (plus 20), AP from 25 to 37-38 (plus 12-13), Telangana from 17 to 25-26 (plus 8-9) and Kerala from 20 to 30 (plus 10). The numbers are telling. Five southern states together gain barely 63-66 additional seats, while just these seven BJP-dominated states gain about 128-131 seats -- nearly double," he stated. P5